DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 434 611 HE 032 389

AUTHOR	Tafel, Jonathan; Eberhart, Nancy
TITLE	Statewide School-College (K-16) Partnerships To Improve Student Performance. State Strategies That Support Successful Student Transitions from Secondary to Postsecondary Education.
INSTITUTION	State Higher Education Executive Officers Association.; ACT, Inc., Iowa City, IA.
SPONS AGENCY	Office of Vocational and Adult Education (ED), Washington, DC.
PUB DATE	1999-07-00
NOTE	22p.; For a report on competency-based admissions standards, see HE 032 388.
AVAILABLE FROM	State Higher Education Executive Officers, 707 Seventeenth St., Suite 2700, Denver, CO 80202-3427. Tel: 303-299-3686.
PUB TYPE	Reports - Descriptive (141)
EDRS PRICE	EDRS Price MF01 Plus Postage. PC Not Available from EDRS.
DESCRIPTORS	*Admission Criteria; *Articulation (Education); Change Strategies; College Admission; College School Cooperation; Educational Change; Educational Planning; Educational Policy; Elementary Secondary Education; Higher Education; Partnerships in Education; State Programs; *State Standards; Statewide Planning; *Strategic Planning
IDENTIFIERS	Georgia; Maryland; Ohio

ABSTRACT

This monograph examines state initiatives to create educational structures that more closely align K-12 and postsecondary education. Data were collected as part of a national survey of state higher education agencies and site visits to Colorado, Georgia, Maryland, Ohio, Washington, and Wisconsin. Site visits in 1997 to Georgia, Maryland, and Ohio focused particularly on two issues: alignment of K-12 reform efforts and college admissions, and efforts to reduce postsecondary remediation and better prepare students. Following an introduction, the report examines the rationale for building a state K-16 system; how various state programs support school-college collaboration; and some new strategies for state K-16 partnerships. Other sections of the report examine: (1) Georgia's P-16 Initiative, which coordinates state goals with local needs; (2) Maryland's K-16 partnership for teaching and learning, a collaboration of the State Department of Education, the Maryland Higher Education Commission, and the University System of Maryland, which has as its goal the redesign of teacher education; and (3) Ohio's K-16 "total system approach," which seeks to increase the number of high school graduates fully prepared for higher education. A final section of the report notes lessons and challenges involved in creating models for K-16 systems. (CH)

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ED 434 611

Statewide School-College (K-16) Partnerships to Improve Student Performance

JONATHAN TAFEL
AND
NANCY EBERHART

JULY 1999

State Strategies that Support Successful Student Transitions from Secondary to Postsecondary Education

A JOINT INITIATIVE OF SHEEO AND ACT, INC.

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This strategy brief is supported through a grant from the Office of Vocational and Adult Education, U.S. Department of Education. Any opinions, findings and conclusions or recommendations expressed in this material are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect those of the U.S. Department of Education.

Foreword

The study of *State Strategies that Support the Successful Transition of Students from Secondary to Postsecondary Education* was a joint initiative of the State Higher Education Executive Officers (SHEEO) and ACT, Inc. carried out from October 1996 through February 1998. The intent of the study was to collect information on and examine state-level strategies that support student success through the linkage of K-12 and postsecondary education systems. In many states, these programs are now included or make up statewide K-16 or P-16 initiatives. Information was gathered through two activities:

A 50-state survey of state higher education coordinating and governing boards. The survey focused on efforts (1) to help K-12 students prepare for college, (2) to support student preparation through college admissions policies and practices, and (3) to ensure successful postsecondary education experiences for those students who are underprepared upon entry to colleges and universities. The survey report, *Statewide College Admissions, Student Preparation, and Remediation Policies and Programs*, is available from the SHEEO office.

Site visits to six states. To supplement the survey findings and to gain better understanding of the education linkages being developed in the states, we conducted site visits in Colorado, Georgia, Maryland, Ohio, Washington, and Wisconsin. We investigated what states were doing (policies and initiatives), how they were doing it (the process for achieving their goals), and the extent to which their goals were being met. The site visits focused on two issues: the alignment of K-12 reform efforts and college admissions, and efforts to reduce postsecondary remediation and strengthen the preparation of students for successful collegiate experiences.

Since conducting the site visits, more has been learned about the diversity of statewide K-16 initiatives across the country. Models reflect specific needs and goals of individual states and take advantage of opportunities to leverage leadership and/or public interest in education issues. For example, discipline-based and content specific efforts focused on mathematics are now underway in Missouri and Oklahoma. Arizona, Massachusetts, New Mexico, New York, and North Carolina are undertaking new state K-16 efforts using teacher education as a point of entry. Pressures resulting from tremendous growth in the school-age population and elimination of affirmative action policies have moved K-12 and

postsecondary education leaders in California and Texas to create new dynamic K-16 partnerships. All trend signs point to continued rapid growth of these K-16 efforts in other states as well.

Statewide School-College (K-16) Partnerships to Improve Student Performance by Jonathan Tafel and Nancy Eberhart reflects what we learned from site visits to Georgia, Maryland, and Ohio in 1997 and updated by recent developments in the states. But our intent is to offer more than a summary of the states' initiatives. For states beginning this work, the brief provides technical guidance of how K-16 systems might be structured and implemented. For states already immersed in K-16 activities, we offer opportunities for continued sharing about what works and why and about cross-state networking support. While attempting to cover the major components of K-16 systems, we recognize that much is left out of this strategy brief. Some of the specific areas of K-12 and postsecondary education alignment are addressed in the following other strategy briefs in this series:

- Higher Education and the Schools
- Statewide Strategies for Implementing Competency-based Admissions Standards
- Statewide Remedial Education Policies
- Teacher Quality and P-16 Reform: The State Policy Context

Together with the survey report, we encourage education leaders and elected officials to use these documents to support state-level discussions of K-16 systems aimed at increasing student achievement and preparation for college. SHEEO and ACT, Inc. welcome your review of these documents and suggestions about how we might assist you in these efforts.

Esther M. Rodriguez
Associate Executive Director
SHEEO

Donald Carstensen
Vice President, Educational Services
ACT, Inc.

Acknowledgements

Jonathan Tafel, Associate Vice Chancellor, Ohio Board of Regents, and Nancy Eberhart, Interim Chief Program Officer, Ohio Department of Education, prepared this strategy brief. The authors were members of a team of state education leaders who participated in the study of *State Strategies that Support the Successful Transition of Students from Secondary to Postsecondary Education*. SHEEO and ACT sincerely appreciate their commitment in this study, as well as their comprehensive and careful analysis of state initiatives addressing state K-16 efforts.

Several individuals were critical to the success of this study. In addition to our authors and their staffs who hosted the site visit in Ohio, we are especially grateful to Stephen Portch, Jan Kettlewell and staff of the University System of Georgia who convened and hosted the site visit in Georgia; and to the hosts of the site visit in Maryland: Patricia Florestano, Michael Rosenthal and Paula Fitzwater from the Maryland Higher Education Commission; Donald Langenberg and Nancy Shapiro from the University System of Maryland; and Nancy Grasmick and Robert Rice from the Maryland State Department of Education. They invited critique of their states' efforts, provided invaluable data and policy documents to inform the study, and reviewed and edited early drafts of this strategy brief. In addition, many others representing state higher education agencies and national organizations participated on site visit teams and provided thoughtful comments about both successful practices and continuing challenges.

In addition to those mentioned above, we would like to thank Robert Wallhaus, Alene Russell, Ed Crowe, and Robert Stein for their critical review of this strategy brief. We also appreciate the talents of Paul Albright and Catherine Walker who contributed to the production of the final document.

Financial support for the preparation and publication of the strategy brief series was provided through a grant from the Office for Vocational and Adult Education, U.S. Department of Education. In particular, we would like to thank Patricia W. McNeil, Assistant Secretary for Vocational and Adult Education, and her staff, Henry Smith and Peggi Zelinko, for their interest and encouragement in this work.

Statewide School-College (K-16) Partnerships to Improve Student Performance

Introduction

Growing concerns that our high school graduates are inadequately prepared for college and work, added to high postsecondary remediation rates, are prodding an increasing number of state leaders to reconsider traditional education structures. In some states, policy makers and educators have concluded that to provide a more coherent educational experience for students, the K-12 and postsecondary education systems must be more closely aligned. Creating additional pressures for this alignment are competition for public resources, demand for a highly educated workforce, and awareness that too few students at both the K-12 and postsecondary levels are able to meet higher academic standards that recently have been introduced in the states.

Sharing responsibility across education sectors – K-12 and postsecondary education – is critical to this alignment. In recent years, many state and local political leaders have supported programs that encourage school-college collaboration and have provided resources to fund transitional programs that strengthen the preparation of students for college. While this may be a necessary first step in system alignment, these programs, by themselves, do not go far enough to sufficiently ensure the successful transition of students from secondary to postsecondary education. If state policy makers want to meet the goals for educational improvement and enhanced student achievement, they will need to reconceive current structures and practices and develop new systemic approaches that link education sectors – kindergarten through college (K-16). Such approaches should address substantive issues (for example, early outreach and preparation for college, teacher quality, and the development of standards, competencies and assessments across education sectors), as well as process and operational issues (for example, coordination of programs, communications of services, funding, and data collection).

The Rationale for Building a State K-16 System

Historically, our systems of education have served many Americans well. However, it is clear that higher levels of achievement and increased educational attainment are required to meet the changing needs of our modern society, one that is increasingly dependent on

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global information technology and the exploding demands of knowledge industries. Outcomes of recent national assessments provide strong evidence that our current education systems are failing many of our students. And if students fail, support for a thriving economy diminishes. Education systems, like other social systems, are fundamentally conservative and less than accepting of change unless forced to do so. During recent national and state elections, many political leaders – Democrats and Republicans – raised concerns about education's deficiencies, and thus added pressure to search for opportunities to make needed improvements. K-16 strategies that systemically link K-12 and postsecondary education systems bolster an agenda that addresses many of the problematic areas embodied in both systems. Following are some of the reasons that may prompt K-12 and postsecondary leaders to act in concert:

- Too few recent high school graduates are ready for successful experiences in college and/or careers. For example, current national data show that postsecondary remediation rates average 30 percent and are higher in some states. To appropriately address remediation issues will require the collective expertise and resources of both the K-12 and higher education systems.
- Student achievement is intrinsically tied to teacher competence and skills, which is the responsibility of both higher education and K-12 systems. According to a recent report of the National Commission on Teaching and America's Future, many practicing teachers are ill prepared to help their students meet high academic standards. "Roughly one-quarter of newly hired American teachers lack the qualifications for their jobs. More than 12 percent of new hires enter the classroom without any formal training at all, and another 14 percent arrive without fully meeting state standards."[1] This information has fueled new public interest in the quality of teacher preparation and professional development. Collaboration between higher education (both arts and sciences and teacher preparation programs) and schools is necessary if beginning teachers are to be knowledgeable in content and pedagogy, and veteran teachers are to be kept current in their discipline and on teaching practice through sustained, appropriate professional development.
- Colleges and universities have an obligation to support the educational success of *all* students that they enroll. Political and education leaders are particularly concerned about the low rates of access, retention, and graduation success of underrepresented students of color. Concerns multiply in light of census data showing the tremendous growth of minority populations in specific regions of the country and in urban school districts. In

[1] *What Matters Most: Teaching for America's Future* (New York: National Commission on Teaching and America's Future, September 1996).

addition, recent legal actions that eliminate affirmative action in college admissions and student aid remove opportunities and practices that most colleges and universities have relied on as recruitment tools over the past decades. Collaborative strategies developed by K-12 and postsecondary systems will especially need to target the preparation, access, and postsecondary education success of these underrepresented students.

- The commitment of higher education to adopt standards that identify and define what students should know and be able to do upon completion of their academic programs significantly lags behind the K-12 standards-based reform movements. But, change may be near. Colleges and universities now face public calls for standards in academic disciplines and demands for holding institutions accountable for student achievement that in previous years were targeted only at K-12 education. Collaborative K-16 approaches can align these standards and thereby ensure that students fully meet their expected learning and education goals. Early assessment and intervention programs administered jointly by schools and colleges will assist schools and students in determining their preparation for higher education, reduce curriculum overlap, and lower the costs to students and taxpayers associated with college remediation.

If the promise of a more educated America is to be realized, leaders of current K-12 and postsecondary education systems will have to forge strategic partnerships to create a seamless K-16 system. The system should assess and develop joint policies, administrative procedures, and governing functions to ensure that students will be able to effectively make transitions across the K-16 education system, and successfully meet their academic and educational goals.

State Program Support for School-College Collaboration

Gaps in education programs and student achievement levels have led leaders in nearly all states to fund early outreach and college preparation programs. These programs are diverse in their goals and targeted student populations. The most common programs are aimed at the following outcomes:

- increasing access to college for underrepresented minorities and/or students from low-income families
- encouraging collaborative projects between local K-12 school districts and higher education institutions to improve student achievement and prepare students for successful collegiate experiences
- increasing and improving student preparation for jobs and careers
- providing information on the availability of student aid.

A recent national survey indicates that more than two-thirds of state higher education agencies have in place early outreach pro-

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grams designed to increase student preparation for college.[2] The following illustrate the variety of these programs across the country.

State Programs Targeting Underrepresented Minority Students: The **Minnesota** *Get Ready!* program, directed by the Minnesota Higher Education Services Office, encourages preparation for college beginning in the fourth grade and focuses on low income students of color and families whose children are the first generation to attend college. The Georgia *Postsecondary Readiness and Enrichment Program* (PREP) provides supplementary academic readiness and enrichment services for middle and high school students who are in at-risk situations, such as economic, social, personal, and environmental. Illinois supports a variety of early outreach programs to encourage and prepare minority students for entry and success in higher education through the Minority Educational Achievement category of its *Higher Education Cooperation Act Grant Program*, sponsored by the Illinois Board of Higher Education. Ohio sponsors a similar program focused on the diversification of the teaching force by providing grants for collaborative efforts between higher education and schools to recruit and retain underrepresented students into the teaching workforce. New Mexico's *Early Intervention and Scholarship Program* focuses on elementary and middle school students from demographic groups with historically low postsecondary participation rates. Oklahoma, through the *Higher Learning Access Program*, targets low-income eighth and ninth grade students for challenging college preparation programs, and provides summer academies for additional science and mathematics experiences.

State Programs that Encourage School-College Collaboration: The Florida *Partnerships in Educational Excellence* program unites colleges of education and public school districts in the preparation of teachers and the enhancement of pre-K-12 education. West Virginia is engaged in a pilot project, *Bridging the Gap*, which uses distance education to add and enhance academic programs to students in remote areas. In South Carolina, a non-profit, independent entity, the South Carolina Council on Educational Collaboration, promotes collaboration between the K-12 sector and higher education. Virginia's *Pre-Collegiate Awareness Program* offers campus-based academic activities for eighth through eleventh grade students.

State Programs that Target Academic and Financial Support for Students: *The Children's Crusade for Higher Education* in Rhode Island provides sustained intervention services and scholarship incentives for low-income youth. Students enroll in the third grade and participate in a variety of enrichment and academic support programs leading to high

[2] Russell, Alene Bycer, *Statewide College Admissions, Student Preparation, and Remediation Policies and Programs: Summary of a 1997 SHEEO Survey* (Denver, CO: State Higher Education Executive Officers and ACT, Inc., January 1998).

school graduation. Scholarships are available to students admitted to colleges, junior colleges or trade schools, as well as assistance for those students participating in union apprenticeship programs. The *Texas Academic Skills Program* (TASP), directed by the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board, serves as a diagnostic and placement mechanism designed to ascertain entering freshman skills. Students must receive a passing score on the mathematics, reading, and writing assessments before being placed in collegiate programs. Those who do not pass each of the sections are enrolled in remedial coursework until they pass the TASP assessment. Arkansas has in place a systematic early assessment of student progress beginning in the eighth grade. The *Education Assessment and Planning System* focuses on assessment and guidance of all students in grades 8 and 10 for success in college and careers. Oklahoma operates a similar program. Kentucky has initiated P-16 local consortia focused on early assessment in mathematics to reduce remediation needs of students entering higher education with plans to extend P-16 consortia statewide. In Missouri, the *K-16 Coalition* is focused on increasing the mathematics performance of students in grades 11 and 12 and the first two years of higher education.

Federal Initiatives Targeting Special Needs: Through certain federal programs, every state in the country is eligible for funding to support initiatives to enhance student preparation and provide linkages between educational systems. For example, *TRIO Programs* in the Higher Education Act provide mentoring and tutorial support for secondary school students in low-income areas. As part of the 1998 reauthorization of the Higher Education Act, new federal programs and resources on teacher education (*Teacher Quality Enhancement Grant Program*) and early outreach (*Gaining Early Awareness and Readiness for Undergraduate Programs - GEAR UP*) provide opportunities for federal/state partnerships for enhanced academic and career preparation. The higher education portion of the *Eisenhower Professional Development Program*, funded by the U.S. Department of Education, creates linkages between higher education and elementary and secondary education in the form of sustained and intensive professional development programs for teachers, particularly in mathematics and science.

Each of these programs is based on critical need and worthy intentions. In many cases, the programs have been used successfully to leverage other federal, state, and local resources. In most cases, however, their impact is not fully realized because they are not well coordinated and services are not effectively integrated. Often, program activities are duplicated, resulting in inefficient use of resources. This piecemeal, programmatic approach to increasing student achievement targets comparatively narrow reform goals. In other words, several small, narrowly defined programs reach only a limited number of students. To be more effective, programs should be supported by an underlying system that brings the full education enterprise together and can utilize the appropriate levers to change educational conceptions and practice

that currently pose barriers to helping students meet their educational goals.

Promising New Strategies: State K-16 Partnerships

State support for a K-16 agenda can provide the coherence, coordination, and articulation needed to produce a more effective and productive educational system and expand opportunities for student academic success. As indicated in the previous section, while most states have engaged in focused *programs* to enhance and enrich student academic success, the emergence of comprehensive *K-16 partnerships* as a strategy to strengthen student academic preparation for college and careers is a recent state policy development. An increasing number of states are currently developing K-16 systems that will bridge individual systems. The expectation is that these statewide approaches will develop coordinated programs and create an effective structure for reducing postsecondary remediation and thereby enhancing the academic achievement of students in K-12 schools and college degree programs, encouraging students to have high academic expectations, and instituting quality teacher preparation and professional development programs.

In 1997, a joint project of SHEEO and ACT, Inc. arranged site visits in six states to examine statewide strategies that support student transitions from secondary to postsecondary degree programs. Three of these states – Georgia, Maryland and Ohio – are developing comprehensive K-16 partnerships to address a number of key concerns, including: the need to reduce high postsecondary remediation among entering freshmen who recently graduated from high school, the need to substantially increase student academic achievement, and the need to strengthen teacher preparation and development. The three states arrived at a K-16 design using approaches that reflect their unique political and educational policy environments. Although there are features common to each approach, what works in one state may not work in another. The following summarizes some of the central components of these current activities.

A K-16 Conceptual Framework

- → **All students can achieve at high levels**
- → **Our educational structures should enable this to occur**
- → **Barriers to student transitions should be identified and eliminated**
- → **Traditional educational boundaries should be reassessed**
- → **A collective vision should be aimed at helping students meet their educational goals**

Georgia's P-16 Initiative: Coordinating State Goals with Local Needs

Georgia's P-16 Initiative emphasizes common goals and communications from the state level and yet supports local control by tailoring activities to meet regional and local needs. Begun in 1995, this P-16 collaborative effort involves four state agencies: the Office of School Readiness, Department of Education,

Department of Technical and Adult Education, and the University System of Georgia. The Georgia P-16 Council is appointed by the governor to provide overall leadership and coordination of P-16 education in the state.

To complement the state-level body, regional and local P-16 councils made up of P-12 and postsecondary educators, school board members, youth advocate organizations, community members, and legislative and business leaders have voluntarily formed to "promote" and "recommend" change in public educational systems to improve student success at all levels. These state-local partnerships are key to implementing the P-16 initiative. Local partners are provided the resources and flexibility to implement and adapt state-level goals and objectives to their specific needs and circumstances. For example, four of the councils are collaborating to articulate academic standards. Level 12 standards will define what students should know and be able to do to be admitted to college, technical institute, or to enter the workforce; level 14 standards will define what students should know and be able to do upon completion of general education in college. The collaborative will specify performance standards and assessments and pilot the work in participating schools, colleges, and technical institutes. The initial work is supported by external funding and technical assistance, and the results will be shared and adapted across the state.

As with the other states visited, an evaluation of student performance in Georgia suggested a need for fundamentally changing its educational system. Prior to the implementation of P-16, annual statewide data showed that approximately 25 percent of Georgia's students were not completing high school. About one-half of those who received a high school diploma each year pursued some postsecondary education. Of these students, only 25 percent finished college. The P-16 strategy has five goals aimed at increasing these levels of educational attainment:

(1) improve student achievement from pre-school through postsecondary education

(2) help students move smoothly from one education system to another

(3) ensure all students who enter postsecondary education are prepared to succeed

(4) increase access and success of all students in postsecondary education, especially from minority and low-income groups

(5) co-reform teacher education and public schools toward practices that result in all children and youth meeting high academic standards.

An essential element of the Georgia P-16 partnership is to set clear standards as to what students should know and be able to do from pre-school through postsecondary education. These standards currently are being developed and linked with new admissions requirements for University System of Georgia institutions that will go into effect in 2001. To ensure that no students fall through the cracks — especially those whose economic and educational

backgrounds suggest they may be "at risk" of not succeeding in secondary or postsecondary education — a new statewide program called the *Postsecondary Readiness Enrichment Program* (PREP) provides identified students in grades 7-12 additional support services. These services are provided year-round through after-school activities and summer camps. They include special instruction in academic readiness skills, cultural enrichment, leadership development, self-esteem building, and career exploration.

To help build academic aspirations and goals beyond high school, PREP also provides resources to local and regional P-16 councils to organize campus visitation days for every seventh grade student in the state. For students entering postsecondary programs, financial support covering tuition, fees, and book allowance is available through the *Helping Outstanding Pupils Educationally* (HOPE) scholarships. To be eligible, students must maintain a "B" grade point average in high school college preparatory curriculum courses and sustain these grades throughout their undergraduate program.

Having good data improves the capacity of a state to take a systemwide perspective of the issues. Recognizing that policies and programs cannot be assessed in the absence of good data, the Georgia P-16 Multi-Agency Linked Student Database will connect student information across the four participating agencies. The goals of the data system are to monitor student progress from pre-school through postsecondary education and into the labor market; allow for early detection and remediation of difficulties in student achievement; and support policies and programs aimed at student success at each level of education.

Maryland's K-16 Partnership for Teaching and Learning: Using Data to Drive Reform

In Maryland, the K-16 Partnership for Teaching and Learning is an alliance of the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE), Maryland Higher Education Commission (MHEC), and the University System of Maryland (USM). The chairmanship of this "voluntary" collaboration rotates among the three institution heads. Started in 1995, the goals of the partnership are far-reaching. They include: setting standards and clear expectations for students; increasing college participation and graduation rates; reducing the need for remediation; and creating a seamless web of postsecondary education in the state. Particularly significant is that Maryland's 1995 *Redesign of Teacher Education* has become a priority of each K-16 partner. The *Redesign* calls for strong content preparation for teachers and extended mentored internship experiences in professional development schools. The partnership is committed to the essential linkage between teaching and learning: students cannot learn what they have not been taught, and teachers cannot teach what they have not learned.

In order to meet this long-term, comprehensive agenda, the partnership is using student performance data primarily derived from the Mary-

land Student Outcome and Achievement Report (SOAR). SOAR includes the following information on recent high school graduates: high school attended; demographics, including race/ethnicity and gender; first-year college attendance; remedial assessments; admission exemptions; performance indicators, such as cumulative GPA and first English and/or math grades; program enrollment; and standardized ACT and SAT test scores. These data are critical to identifying student performance gaps and areas where state education resources might best be targeted. Based on responses to informal surveys of district superintendents, the SOAR data have made valuable contributions to linking the K-12 and postsecondary systems. For example:

- School principals review SOAR results with their staffs and many have developed strategies for addressing the remediation concerns identified by the report.
- District curriculum offices analyze SOAR data to determine implications for curriculum development.
- SOAR data have been used to bring high school and community college faculty together to discuss high school exit and college entry expectations.
- SOAR is used to verify that students who take the college preparatory program in high school are more likely to succeed than those who do not. To encourage more students to enroll in rigorous academic courses, high school counselors share these findings with students and their parents.
- SOAR is used by MSDE to establish performance criteria for students participating in career and technology education programs.

Statewide reporting on student outcomes can lead to valuable public policy. The partnership allows for mutual support, as well as for mutual accountability, for important student outcomes. Each education segment collaborates to bring vital information on student and teacher achievement to the public. MSDE reports student achievement data and is moving toward the implementation of high-stakes graduation assessments. USM is developing performance assessments for teacher candidates. These assessments, combined with the data collected by MHEC through SOAR, yield a powerful collection of policy levers.

Input from K-12 and community college educators have expanded and improved SOAR data. For example, recently a K-16 examination of postsecondary remediation was undertaken after SOAR data showed a high number of high school graduates were being placed in remedial programs. School administrators noted a number of discrepancies in the remediation placement and program practices at the state's colleges and universities, as evidenced by:

- inconsistent definitions of remediation across postsecondary institutions
- diversity of assessment instruments to place students in remediation programs
- variances in cut-off scores and norms used for placing students

- → low expectations of achievement for secondary at-risk students
- → differences in how students are identified for placement assessments.

They argued that such incomparable policies made program improvements and student counseling difficult. As a result, the Maryland Council of Community College Instructional Deans began an initiative to create statewide standards and procedures for placing students in remedial programs, including the development of standardized statewide instruments. Outcomes of the effort will take effect in the year 2000. At the same time, MSDE is developing a comprehensive intervention plan to be implemented in the fall 2000 to improve at-risk student achievement and extended access to postsecondary institutions. Maryland also is initiating regional K-16 consortia to generate focused deliberations on mutual K-16 issues in the area of secondary school, community college, and four-year university linkages. A result of this work in Maryland that will be helpful to other states is that the use of good data for policy analyses and report development brings together concerned people and stimulates policy initiatives that address critical state goals.

Ohio's K-16 Approach: Creating a System from Programs

Over the years, a number of committees and studies have focused on the postsecondary remediation problem in Ohio and offered recommendations. In 1997, the most recent of these efforts – the Secondary and Higher Education Remediation Advisory Commission (SHERAC) – found that the state had many promising programs but no statewide system. For a number of years Ohio, like many states, has been adding initiatives to address problems associated with student preparation and transitions between the K-12 and higher education systems. Ohio was program rich and system poor. Coping with the numerous isolated programs led mid-level program managers at the state agencies to initiate the move to a system perspective and the development of a K-16 educational continuum. At first, Ohio developed its K-16 agenda from the "bottom up." That is, the impetus for a K-16 approach to education arose from this "building block" approach of adding programs to address student preparation and issues in student transitions from one education system to another or to the world of work.

To address the problem, the commission recommended a "total system approach" to focus the collective expertise and resources of both the K-12 and higher education systems in Ohio on a shared objective – to increase significantly the number of high school graduates who are fully prepared for higher education. Following the commission's recommendations, a Joint Council was formed consisting of three members each from the Ohio Board of Regents and the Ohio State Board of Education. The Joint Council was charged with implementing the commission's recommendations and acting as the driving force in forging a K-16 educational continuum in the state. The Joint Council formalized the connections between the two education agencies in the

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state and authorized development and implementation of a K-16 system.

Ohio is currently pursuing its K-16 agenda through the following four broad approaches:

(1) **Performance Expectations** – Ohio is developing strategies for increasing student aspirations and expectations related to higher academic standards. "Common Expectations" are being developed in six disciplines in which competencies are identified in terms of what all students should know and be able to do upon exiting high school to prepare them for success in higher education and careers. Next steps include exploring appropriate assessments for measuring achievement of the competencies, and the linkages between these new competencies and higher education admissions policies and practices.

(2) **Capacity Building** – The goal of creating a total system approach that aligns all components of the teaching and learning process across a K-16 educational continuum and into the world of work requires building the capacity of the state's education systems to effectively provide student and academic services to students. To do this, the Ohio effort will identify resources and strategies for schools needed to provide students quality learning experiences and appropriate assessments. Current state-level early assessment and intervention strategies will be redesigned and scaled up to reach all school districts.

(3) **Public Engagement** – The state is developing a broad-based public engagement strategy designed to increase public awareness and generate public support for new efforts to improve the academic performance of students, teachers, and schools. The "Common Expectations" will provide an opportunity to develop strategies for increasing public understanding and to support improved student achievement along with communicating a consistent set of academic expectations to the public.

(4) **Teacher Education** – The state effort will improve learning experiences for all students by ensuring that both prospective and current teachers and administrators are highly qualified and competent in their profession. Ohio already has taken a big step in the improvement of teacher education through the development of new licensure standards for teachers.

While Herculean, this Ohio state agenda provides a blueprint for the alignment of education systems and increased capacity for student achievement. The *systems* approach has been acknowledged explicitly through the long-term agenda of the Joint Council. The focus is statewide and complements the "bottom up" approach discussed earlier.

Creating Models for K-16 Systems: Lessons and Challenges

The three states involved in the SHEEO/ACT transition study are focusing their K-16 ap-

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proaches on changes that promote successful transitions for all students. Following are some common lessons that they have learned and challenges they continue to face.

Establish Explicit Goals: Developing consensus on the goals of the K-16 partnership is an initial step that provides a vision and direction for the statewide activities. All three states involved in the study identified similar goals for their efforts based on the mutual concerns of both K-12 and postsecondary education. The synergy of joint consultation resulted in consensus of issues and goals. Examples include communicating and supporting high student expectations, reducing remedial coursework for recent high school graduates, ensuring better prepared teachers, providing early intervention when students are not achieving up to expectations, and offering incentives for students to strive for success.

Ensuring that lofty goals for a K-16 system do not just remain on paper, but are jointly promoted and implemented by committed leaders from across elementary, secondary, and postsecondary education is a serious challenge for states. Leaders in Georgia, Maryland, and Ohio have committed agency resources and pursued state, local, and external funding support to keep the implementation process moving forward. At the same time, they have volunteered to participate in national and regional initiatives that have kept them visible and accountable for outcomes. Without agreement upon goals and explicit strategies to meet them, K-16 initiatives will dissipate from lack of action. An early "victory" or achievement is important to illustrate the potency of new relationships.

Create a Statewide Organizational Framework: There is no single organizational framework that guarantees success. The three states in the study are organized differently, yet all embrace a K-16 commitment. However, we can say that a common key ingredient in building a state K-16 agenda is the development and maintenance of partnerships among education organizations. It starts with the firm commitment of state level leadership in K-12 and postsecondary education that is based on shared interests. Partnerships also should involve staffs and board members who may not have known each other previously. Efforts to make the partnership a shared responsibility, build trust, and avoid turf struggles are essential to ultimate success. Further, the agenda of the partnership must foster a "win-win" attitude on the part of all participants if change is to be a reality. Each participant must be able to identify its particular role and recognize how it will benefit by being part of the collaboration.

It is interesting to note that outside pressure leveraged agency commitment in each of the three states studied. For example, in Ohio a report generated by the Legislative Office of Education Oversight (LOEO) put the issue of continuous high remediation rates on the table and suggested further specific actions which, in turn, led to major collaborative initiatives designed to study the issues and create an implementation strategy.

States often struggle with how to balance start-up approaches – top-down or bottom-up. Many states begin with top-down approaches to ensure commitment by key state leadership and establish priorities. This approach sometimes leads to resistance from local districts and higher education and K-12 faculty who feel left out of critical decision-making processes that target local needs. Other states focus their efforts at the grass roots. The challenges to these strategies include the ability of local educators to scale-up promising practices. For example, the leadership and commitment of the governor in Georgia to systemically improve education for the state's citizens provided both the impetus and the pressure for state and local educators to respond. States wanting to begin a K-16 effort will need to assess their own political environments and determine where opportunities for success are best achieved.

Find Incentives to Sustain the Partnerships: A number of issues will have to be addressed as the partnership continues over time. Simultaneous to influencing existing practice, the partnership will be encouraging new directions in state education policies. Indeed, changing traditional practices will severely test the K-16 partnership, so the vision and commitment to the overriding goals must be strong enough to counteract the impulses to revert to the old systems.

The development of state K-16 efforts is still in very early stages in the states studied by SHEEO; however, the efforts in Georgia, Maryland, and Ohio already are demonstrating strategies for sustaining their efforts. As noted earlier, each of the states has the strong commitment of education leaders and key staff to the goals of their K-16 partnerships. Using empirical evidence, they have defined the problems that need to be addressed and have been candid about what is and is not working. Some have articulated and communicated a consistent message to the public regarding the partnerships' goals. In addition to promising continual evaluation of programmatic directions for accountability and achievement of outcomes, they anticipate making timely adjustments when needed. In each state, a formal mechanism has been established to link K-12 and higher education boards, thereby facilitating communication, trust, effective working relationships, and the development of common agendas.

Develop Comprehensive Data Systems to Identify System Gaps and Inform New Policy: The ability of a state to collect quality data and conduct appropriate analysis is necessary for an effective K-16 education system. Robust student databases are required to monitor student progress across the K-16 continuum, enable early assessment for remediation of academic shortcomings, assess intervention activities, and locate barriers within the system. In all three states visited, data germane to student progress and remediation were employed to highlight policy issues related to student transitions and mobility throughout the educational continuum. The crucial lesson here is that they began with the data on hand to

get started, but then decided to improve their data systems to understand more.

In Ohio, barriers exist to the development of a comprehensive data system across the K-16 educational continuum. Student information in the K-12 system is collected in the aggregate, while the higher education system collects information about each student using the Social Security number. Thus, there is a disconnect between the systems that impedes the linking of student databases. The two education agencies are exploring avenues to connect systems to follow students through the total K-16 system.

To broaden these data systems means overcoming many challenges including privacy restrictions, incompatible operating systems, bureaucratic barriers, and public fears about "Big Brother." State data systems also reveal critically important problems in data collection. For example, to show the relationship of Maryland students taking college preparatory courses in high school and their college performance, the 1998 SOAR included data reported by students who took the SAT or ACT assessments. Among the limitations noted by the MHEC is that not all high school graduates who went on to college were included. Not captured in the study were the high school experiences of the nearly 30 percent of students who did not take the assessments and enrolled in community colleges or open-door institutions. The study also revealed that without an evaluation of course content, comparison across classes and schools is difficult.

In Georgia, state leaders had information about student progress, but the picture was incomplete. The four education agencies that make-up the state's P-16 system developed a P-16 Multi-Agency Linked Student Database to address these information gaps. Each of the participating agencies has signed a bilateral agreement stipulating the objectives of the system and conditions under which data may be shared in order to protect privacy and confidentiality concerns. After undergoing pilot testing, the database now is in use. States developing K-16 systems can use expanded data systems to measure student progress across education levels, evaluate the effectiveness of the various P-16 components, and address privacy and confidentiality concerns.

Establish a Communication System to Disseminate Information and Encourage Public Engagement: Critical to the success of a K-16 initiative is effective communication, not just internally within state education agencies but to educational stakeholders, the business community, and the general public. Public engagement and debate of educational issues are indispensable components of success. In most states, such communication mechanisms either do not exist, or if they do exist, are often too narrowly based. The states studied under the SHEEO/ACT project currently are developing comprehensive communications systems for their K-16 initiatives. For example, a subcommittee of the Georgia P-16 Council actively promotes communication to the public about the statewide P-16 initiative, including support for local and regional P-16

councils and fostering linkages with other educational reform groups. To ensure that all information on the P-16 effort is consistent and to guide communication decisions, a document called *A Model for the Dissemination of Messages* has been developed and shared with P-16 stakeholders. This communications plan is part of a strategic approach to build support, ensure that all the critical players are "on message," and that people across the state are learning from each other.

In Ohio, the business community has become an effective partner in creating change in education as a partner in Ohio's BEST – Building Excellent Schools for the Twenty-First Century. BEST's membership includes business groups and individual corporations, labor organizations, professional trade associations, institutions of higher education, non-profit organizations, educators, parents, and students. BEST identifies and publicizes proven educational strategies that are keys to building a successful K-16 system. BEST has been a powerful ally in communicating complex educational issues effectively to Ohio citizens.

Identify Substantive Issues that Require Immediate Attention: In any state, several issues could be incorporated or become central components of a K-16 effort. For example, identifying and defining academic standards and competencies of what students should know and be able to do from pre-kindergarten into postsecondary programs is the focus in a number of states. In recent years, teacher education and professional development have become critical education linkage issues. Indeed, states interested in beginning a K-16 dialogue can often use quality preparation for teachers as the justification and starting point for such action. Because teacher education is a joint responsibility of school systems and higher education, colleges and schools of education, arts and sciences, and school districts will need to become partners in the development of high-quality teacher preparation programs and be jointly responsible for teacher performance outcomes. An example of one strategy in Georgia is currently underway. After a 1997 study by the Georgia P-16 Council on the status of teaching in the state, the Georgia Board of Regents adopted a new teacher preparation policy for all public universities that prepare teachers. The policy, adopted in 1998, calls for universities to "guarantee" that all graduates recommended for teacher certification are able to demonstrate success in bringing students from diverse groups to high levels of learning. The universities will follow up their graduates for two years and they will readmit for further work any graduate found lacking in essential knowledge and skills by the school district where the graduate is teaching.

In each of the three states studied, teacher preparation is central to K-12 educational improvement and to the K-16 system. To take advantage of the current national interest in teacher education, all three are participating in the National Commission on Teaching and America's Future (NCTAF). NCTAF has asked the states to share strategies, progress, and experiences as part of a national network;

conduct state policy inventories that outline the status of teaching and teacher quality; and use the policy inventory to create state action plans that link teacher development and school reform. Involvement in NCTAF and other national initiatives offers states resources and networking support that can help guide their teacher reform efforts and integrate them with other state K-16 goals.

Conclusion and Summary

States are developing K-16 partnerships because they recognize that the current systems are failing to effectively educate many students, and this has adverse impacts on the state and on future economic growth. Many states are assessing current educational practices for effectiveness while developing and implementing initiatives that coordinate resources and programs. These efforts support increased student achievement and successful transitions from K-12 to postsecondary education and careers.

Through statewide communications strategies, data collection and program alignment, Georgia, Maryland, and Ohio hope to offer students more effective support and options for meeting their academic and career goals. Finally, in developing their K-16 initiatives, these states are making a visible commitment to long-lasting education change where responsibility and accountability for student performance are shared by K-12 and postsecondary systems and state and local policy makers.